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A PERPLEXING SITUATION

BY

S. JENNIE SMITH

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A PERPLEXING SITUATION

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

MR. MIDDLETON, . . *who is inclined to be miserly.*
MRS. MIDDLETON, ... *his patient Wife.*
TOM MIDDLETON, ... *his Son.*
JESSIE MIDDLETON, ... *his eldest Daughter.*
SUE MIDDLETON, ... *his second Daughter.*
LUCY FAIR, . . . *a Niece whom he has adopted.*
MAUD, ... *a friend of the family.*
MRS. NOSIE, *a Neighbor who likes to investigate mysteries.*
ALEXANDER WILSON, . . . *Jessie's young man.*
MARY, ... *the Irish servant.*
FRITZ, ... *the man-of-all-work.*
UNCLE EPITUMAS, . { *from way up-country, who has come down to look about a spell.*
HEALTH OFFICER.

PROPERTIES.

Tastefully furnished sitting-room, with lounge, table, chairs, books, bucket, sofa-pillow, shawl, check-book.

COSTUMES, MODERN.

TIME FOR REPRESENTATION, ABOUT AN HOUR

A PERPLEXING SITUATION

ACT I

SCENE.—*Tastefully furnished sitting-room in* MR. MIDDLETON'S *home. Door on right leading to hall. Door left, to adjoining room.* JESSIE, LUCY, *and* SUE *discovered reading. Enter* MRS. MIDDLETON, L.

MRS. M. Well, girls, have you decided what to wear to the grand wedding, down the street?

JESSIE. Speaking for myself, I positively have nothing fit to wear on such an occasion, and shall be compelled to send my regrets.

SUE. I am in the same boat.

JESSIE. I examined my entire wardrobe this morning, and actually cried over the result. When I stated the case to father he made some sneering remark about a Flora McFlimsey condition of affairs, and I had to take myself right out of the room to keep from talking disrespectfully to him. I don't understand how he can be so stingy, when he has plenty of money, and we really need new clothes.

SUE. Yes; I have to turn and twist every way to make my small allowance clothe me half decently.

MRS. M. It is a lamentable fact that your father is inclined to be close.

SUE. Inclined to be close, ma? That is putting it mildly. He is up and down stingy, as Jessie says, and what we are going to do about this wedding, I'm sure I don't know. How will it look for every one of us to send regrets? It makes me blush to think of it.

MRS. M. Lucy, dear, we haven't heard from you yet. What are you going to do?

LUCY. Why, auntie, my best dress is in no more suitable condition for a grand wedding than the other girls' dresses are, and if it were—

SUE. And if it were, Lucy wouldn't go, you may be sure. I never saw such a stay-at-home creature as she is. Why,

Lucy, you can't expect ever to be married, if you keep away from the sterner sex the way you do.

LUCY. Suppose I do not. I know many an unmarried woman who is both happy and comfortable.

SUE. Of course, but then it seems unnatural for a girl like you to dislike the society of young men.

JESSIE. Speaking of young men, Lucy, what ever became of that young man who used to be at your home so much when I was on a visit there?

LUCY. (*in confusion*) I don't know.

JESSIE. Did you tell him that you were coming here to live?

LUCY. (*in a low tone*) I have not seen him since the day papa was buried.

JESSIE. But you came right away, and you ought to have told him where you were coming.

LUCY. My circumstances were so changed that I did not feel like inviting any of my old friends to call on me. I thought if any of them were anxious they would manage to discover my whereabouts.

SUE. But that was foolish, dear—

MRS. M. Girls, don't you see that you are annoying your cousin? Surely she knows best how to attend to her own affairs.

LUCY. (*laying her hand caressingly on* MRS. M.'S) You are so kind and thoughtful, auntie. What should I have done without you?

(*Enter* MR. MIDDLETON *and* TOM, R. *The women continue to talk in a low tone.*)

MIDDLETON. I don't see why they will put up with such a man.

TOM. They won't very long, or I'm mistaken.

(*The men continue talking, and the women's voices grow louder.*)

MRS. M. It does seem ridiculous to put so much stuff into sleeves, but when it's the fashion what is one to do about it? You can't go around looking different from other people.

SUE. Of course not.

JESSIE. If I were wealthy enough to be independent of the opinion of others, I'd just set some respectable fashions. People go so to extremes. Either the sleeves are immense, or they are fitted so tightly to your arms that you have no comfort.

MRS. M. So far as the hair is concerned the style never was plainer nor prettier than at present.

TOM. (*talking above the noise*) The shares are worth nothing—absolutely nothing.

(*Here all begin talking at once, and in such a loud tone that nobody can be heard.*)

MIDDLETON. (*puts an end to the noise by going hastily toward the door*, L., *and saying, impatiently*) There's no use trying to talk where the women are, Tom. They won't let you get a word in edgeways. I should think their tongues would get tired, running the live-long day.

JESSIE. Well, that is as cool as a cucumber. I wonder who has been doing more talking than you two men. There are four of us, and only two of you, and yet we could scarcely hear ourselves think.

MIDDLETON. (*laughing*) No, I shouldn't suppose you could, with the noise you were making. As for ourselves, why, we do desist now and then. We scarcely say a word after we reach the office, whereas you women couldn't keep your tongues still a minute, if you were paid for it.

LUCY. You'd better try us, Uncle John.

MIDDLETON. Well, I will try you. If you can keep from saying a single word from now until six o'clock, I'll give in that you can keep your tongues still, and will present you each with a fifty-dollar bill in the bargain.

JESSIE. (*jumping up and clapping her hands*) A fifty-dollar bill! Good! I'm willing to try for it.

SUE. (*enthusiastically*) Indeed, I am, too.

LUCY. I hardly need say that I am ready and anxious to make the trial. How about you, auntie?

MRS. M. Of course, I should like to try for it, but will it be possible?

JESSIE. (*hastily*) We'll make it possible.

SUE. Certainly, we will. A fifty-dollar bill isn't to be scorned at such a time as this.

LUCY. (*coaxingly*) Oh! do try, auntie. It is Saturday, and a disagreeable day at that. We certainly won't have any callers. If any one should come we can send word that we are engaged, which will certainly be the fact—engaged in keeping still. Think how fifty dollars will help along with your costume for the wedding.

JESSIE. But you won't take it out of our regular yearly allowance, will you, father?

MIDDLETON. (*chuckling*) No, if you win it, which I haven't the slightest idea you will, it is to be an extra

allowance, having nothing to do with your other extravagances.

SUE. Extravagances! Just hear him talk! If he had to provide for some girls—

MIDDLETON. Never mind; you've got a chance to earn something for yourselves now. Come, I'll make it seventy-five apiece.

JESSIE. Good! seventy-five apiece!

TOM. Don't get too generous, father; you may regret it

MIDDLETON. There's no need for alarm. I tell you that it is impossible—absolutely impossible—for a woman to hold her tongue. She wasn't born that way.

LUCY. We intend to make you change your opinion, Uncle John, but may we write what we have to say?

MIDDLETON. (*decidedly*) No, there is not to be any writing or communication of any kind, except by motions. You say that you will send word to callers that you are engaged, and you'll have no need to communicate with any one else. (*Aside to* TOM) That's a joke; how can they send word that they are engaged, without speaking? Well, we'll let them settle that themselves. (*To the others*) Now, I think I can leave you in the firm belief that every one of you will lose that seventy-five dollars.

JESSIE. No, indeed, we mean to win it, so you may as well be prepared to settle with us this evening.

SUE. Suppose one of us speaks, and the rest do not—what then, father?

MIDDLETON. Why, you all lose the money, of course. It would be possible for the rest of you to keep still if one in the party was allowed to speak. Now we're off, and, mind, not another word from *any* of you between now and six o'clock. Come, Tom.

(*Exit* MIDDLETON *and* TOM, R.)

TOM. (*putting his head in door-way and speaking in a low tone*) Now you've got a chance to win some money, and don't you lose it under any consideration. Father can well afford to give it, too. (*Exit.*)

(*Immediately all the women think of something very important that they ought to have said, and by all sorts of ridiculous motions try to convey the idea to one another.* SUE *goes to the window, and then turning hastily to the others points to* JESSIE, *making her understand that she must remain in the room, while the others leave. Exit,* R., *all but* JESSIE, *and as they go they put their fingers over their mouths as a warning to her that she must not speak.*)

(*Enter*, R., ALEXANDER WILSON.)

WILSON. (*advancing to* JESSIE'S *side*) I am so glad to find you alone; but, pardon me, dearest, for coming thus unannounced. I have something important to say to you, and must say it now. To-night at eleven I leave town for a month, and before I go I feel that I must tell you of my love, and get some assurance from you that I am loved in return. Tell me, Jessie, that I shall not ask in vain.

(JESSIE *shakes her head and looks distressed.*)

WILSON. What! you do not love me!

(JESSIE *nods her head and points to her mouth.*)

WILSON. (*looking bewildered*) What is the matter? Can't you speak? Can you not say the words that will make me the happiest man on earth? What has happened, my darling? (*Looking at her closely.*) Oh! I understand; your mouth is sore. Then, surely, you will write and explain. (*Takes out paper and pencil, which he offers to* JESSIE, *but she waves them away and tries to tell him by motions that she cannot write either.*)

WILSON. (*stepping back, and speaking aside*) Can I believe my senses? Am I awake or only dreaming that Jessie will have no communication with me? (*Returning to* JESSIE.) Dearest—once more—do you love me?

(JESSIE *nods her head and then points to a clock on mantel and tries to explain that she will be free to speak at six o'clock.*)

WILSON. Ah! you want that bottle? (*Going to mantel and taking down bottle that stands near clock.*) Ah! I see! It is an ointment. Is it for your hands or your mouth, dear, or both? Have you the rheumatism, or—what under the sun is the matter with you?

(JESSIE *waves him away and still points to clock and tries to form the figure six.*)

WILSON. Come back at six o'clock, do you mean? (JESSIE *nods her head.*) O Jessie! I knew that this was scarcely a proper hour to call; but I thought my love would excuse such a small impropriety. (*Stiffly.*) No, Miss Middleton, if you care for me at all you will listen to me now, and not make me wait until a more appropriate hour. What! silent still? Then farewell, and farewell forever. (*Starts toward door at* R., *aside*) This is hard, especially as I ex-

pected to be invited to spend the day and have lunch with them. (*Exit*, R.)

(JESSIE, *covering her face with her hands and throwing herself in a chair, begins to cry. Enter all the others*, L., *who, by motions and caresses, endeavor to console her. Knock at hall door. All start to their feet. Enter* MARY, R.)

MARY. Sure, ma'am, is it biled inions or termatesses you'll be afther havin' for dinner this ave'nin'?

(MRS. M. *shakes her head.*)

MARY. (*in surprise*) Which, ma'am?

(MRS. M. *shakes her head again and points to her mouth.*)

MARY. Is it sick you are, ma'am?

All struggle to keep from laughing, and MRS. M. *sinks back in her chair and hides her face behind her handkerchief.*)

MARY. (*rushing to the door at right*) It's faintin', she is. (*Screaming*) Fritz, Fritz, wather! wather! quick!

FRITZ. (*from below*) Vater! Fire mit the house! Fire! fire! fire!

(MRS. M., *running to the door is about to speak when she is stopped by the girls, who drag her back and cover her mouth, while* MARY *stands by screaming frantically for water. In rushes* FRITZ, R., *with a pail of water, which he dumps all over the floor in his excitement, at the same time crying "fire" at the top of his voice. Some one in the street takes up the cry, bringing out the fire-engine, which is soon heard by the door.* MRS. M. *struggles to speak, but is carried to the room at* L. *by two of the girls, while the others endeavor to calm the servants and make them understand that they must dismiss the firemen.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

(*Scene as before. Enter* UNCLE EPITUMAS, R.)

UNCLE EP. Wal, I hadn't no idee that folks deown in the city kept their houses open this away. Should think they'd be afeerd of burglars. Now, to home we never have sech visitors, but deown here it's diff'renter. Wonder where all the folks be, anyhow. (*Glancing around*) This is a right smart-lookin' place now—shouldn't mind livin' here myself.

(*Enter* LUCY, L. *She starts back in fear at sight of the old man.*)

UNCLE EP. (*slowly approaching her*) Why, don't you know me, dear? I'm Uncle Ep from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where your father uster live when he was a mite of a shaver.

(LUCY *nods her head to indicate that she did know about him, and then getting the family album, compares* UNCLE EP'S *picture in that with himself. Becoming convinced, she shakes his hand cordially and motions him to sit down.*)

UNCLE EP. (*taking the offered seat*) It's nigh onter thirty year sence I've been deown to the city afore, but seein' there wasn't much adoin' jest now, I thought I'd jest come and look around a spell. How's all the folks? None to home but yourself?

(LUCY *points to her mouth to show him that she cannot speak.*)

UNCLE EP. Do tell! Dumb, eh? She's a putty critter, too. Born that way, my dear?

(LUCY *shakes her head. Enter* SUE, L.)

UNCLE EP. (*rising*) Howdy, dear? I'm Uncle Ep from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where your father uster live. I ain't been in these parts for nigh onter thirty year, so I thought I'd jest come and look around a spell.

(SUE, *convinced by a nod from* LUCY, *shakes hands with the old man, and then gives him to understand that she cannot speak.*)

UNCLE EP. (*sitting again*) Wal, it jest beats all! Be you dumb too? How did it all come abeout?

(*Both girls shake their heads.* JESSIE *enters from door at* L., *locks it and puts the key in her pocket. Then she looks wonderingly at the old man.*)

UNCLE EP. (*going toward her*) Don't you know me, dear? I'm Uncle Ep, from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where your father uster live. I ain't been in these parts for nigh onter thirty year, so I thought I'd jest come and look abeout a spell. Feelin' right smart?

(JESSIE *glances at the girls, and then gives her hand to the old man, after which she points to her mouth and shakes her head.*)

UNCLE EP. Wal, I'm flabbergasted! Be you dumb, too? John Henry never writ that his gals was all dumb. Pshaw! putty critters too; all so putty that I don't know which is the puttiest.

(*The girls struggle hard to keep from laughing.*)

UNCLE EP. (*yawning*) Somehow this travelin' has clean tuckered me out. Where's your ma, girls? Ain't she to home?

(JESSIE *points to door at* L., *and tries to explain that her mother is lying down.*)

UNCLE EP. Sick, eh? Pity now, ain't it? Wal, don't bother her abeout me. (*Glancing at lounge, and yawning again*) If I could lie deown a spell and rest me, arter that train ride, I'd be obleeged to you, my dears.

(*The girls' faces brighten at this request.* LUCY *hastily finds a sofa pillow,* SUE *gets a large shawl, and* JESSIE *fixes the lounge, and covers the old man up after he has lain down. Then they wave their hands in triumph, motion to one another that they too will go and take a rest, and after unlocking the door, exit* L.)

(*Enter* MAUD, R.)

MAUD. I wonder where they all are. I thought as it was such a disagreeable day they wouldn't be apt to have any

company, so I'd just run in and chat with the girls for a while. Mary says that Mrs. Middleton is sick and is past speaking, but I think she must be mistaken. Why, I was in here late last night, and she was as well as ever, and there hasn't been a doctor's carriage by the door this morning, I'm certain. There was a fire-engine and a cry somewhere of fire, but that seemed to be a false alarm. I think I'll sit down and wait here. Some of them will come along pretty soon. (*Takes a book and sits behind the curtain by the window.*)

(*Enter* MRS. NOSIE, R.)

MRS. NOSIE. I just took the privilege of an intimate friend and walked in, unannounced—dear me, there's nobody here. I wonder where they all are. Mary was just telling our girl that dear Mrs. Middleton was taken very sick this morning. What can be the matter with her? There have been some pretty mysterious goings-on in this house, too. I'm sure that Fritz called out fire, and then when the firemen came Mary rushed out and sent them off in a hurry. She seemed to be as mad as could be. Yes, I'm convinced that something's up, and I mean to investigate.

MAUD. (*aside*) Oh! you do? Well, I mean to get rid of you. (*Stepping out*) Good morning, Mrs. Nosie.

MRS. NOSIE. (*looking startled*) Dear me, I didn't see you, dear. Good morning.

MAUD. Have you heard about poor Mrs. Middleton?

MRS. NOSIE. Why, how you talk! What is the matter with her?

MAUD. I don't know, but Mary says she's past speaking. Her illness has been kept very quiet, and I was wondering if she could have any contagious disease.

MRS. NOSIE. (*shrieking*) Contagious disease! Dear me! I'm going right home. You'd better come, too.

MAUD. Understand me; I didn't say she had such a disease. I merely wondered if it could be anything of the kind.

MRS. NOSIE. (*backing toward door at right*) Yes, yes, I know; but as you say, they have kept it very quiet, and that looks suspicious; besides, there have been some pretty mysterious goings-on in this house this morning—not one of those girls has shown her face at the door. Indeed, I feel convinced that something is wrong, and I won't stay here another minute. (*Exit*, R.)

MAUD. What a mistake I made! Now she'll go and

spread all about the town that there is a contagious disease in this house. Well, I managed to get rid of her, and she won't be here prying around. But it does begin to look as if something was wrong; they're always in this room when they are at home. I wonder if I ought to stay. Pshaw! I'm not afraid. I'll wait a while, anyhow. (*Moving thoughtfully toward the lounge, she sits down on* UNCLE EP, *who jumps up and thereby knocks her on the floor.*)

UNCLE EP. (*apologetically, as he assists her to arise*) Oh! excuse me, my dear; I hadn't no idee I was goin' to do that. I thought I was up kentry, and a great bar was arter me.

MAUD. (*indignantly breaking away from him*) Sir, who are you, and how dare you lay your hand on me?

UNCLE EP. (*looking in amazement at* MAUD) Wal, I swan to man! this ain't one of them dumb gals, either. I'm powerful glad that one on 'em can speak, though she do seem to be so all-fired mad. Say (*addressing* MAUD), my dear, I'm Uncle Ep from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where your father lived when he was a leetle shaver. I ain't been in these parts for nigh onter thirty year, so I thought I'd jest come deown and look abeout a spell.

MAUD. Oh! excuse me, Mr. Middleton; I spoke hastily. I didn't know who you were, but I've often heard them speak of Uncle Ep., and now I recognize you from the picture they have of you in the album.

UNCLE EP. (*sitting and smoothing his rumpled hair*) Yes, yes, I recolmember when that pictur was drawed. A man come areond to the house with his drawin'-box, and he drawed it fairly, too. But I ain't what I uster was, not by a long shake. But ben't you one of John Henry's gals, my dear?

MAUD. No, I am merely a friend and neighbor.

UNCLE EP. Jest so, jest so; yes, yes, I see. Pity, now, ain't it, that them gals is all dumb?

MAUD. (*in surprise*) Dumb? (*Aside*) They're playing some trick on the old man, I'm afraid, but it won't do for me to tell him. (*To* UNCLE EP.) Do you know if Mrs. Middleton is very sick, sir?

UNCLE EP. Wal, I ruther guess she ain't powerful bad—a headache, most likely, or something thataway. But I ain't seen her sence I came, so I couldn't say for sure.

MAUD. (*aside*) If he, a guest from the country, hasn't seen Mrs. Middleton yet, it's very strange.

(*Enter* JESSIE, L.)

MAUD. (*going to her*) Well, here you are at last. How is your mother? I hear that she is ill.

(JESSIE *points to her mouth and sadly shakes her head.*)

MAUD. (*looking bewildered*) What is the matter? Can't you speak?

UNCLE EP. (*nudging* MAUD, *and saying in a low tone to her*) Don't you know I told you that them gals is all dumb?

(*Enter* SUE, L.)

UNCLE EP. (*aside to* MAUD) That gal is dumb, too, and they're likely critters as you can find anywheres.

MAUD. (*walking toward window*) I can't understand it, and I won't make the attempt. I'm going home. (*Starts toward door at* R.)

(JESSIE *and* SUE *go after her, lead her to the lounge, and make her sit down. Then the two girls try by motions to explain the situation, but* MAUD *can't understand. Meanwhile* UNCLE EP *stands by and shakes his head dolefully over the affliction of being dumb. Bell rings. Gentleman and* MARY *enter,* R.)

MARY. If you plaze, he tuk it upon himself to come in the whiles I was a-pintin' him to the parlor. (*Exit,* R.)

GENT. Excuse me, ladies; but I am the health officer, and I am informed that a case of small-pox is concealed in this house. Of course, it is my duty to investigate the matter.

(JESSIE *and* SUE *look at one another in dismay.*)

MAUD. Surely, you have been misinformed, sir.

OFFICER. Are you one of the ladies of the house, miss?

MAUD. No, I am merely a friend.

OFFICER. Then I should like to hear from one of the others.

UNCLE EP. But them gals is all dumb, and as for the case you speak on't, it ain't here.

OFFICER. Are you, sir, one of the family?

UNCLE EP. It looks that away. I'm Uncle Epitumas from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where John Henry lived when he was a leetle shaver. I ain't been in these parts for nigh onter thirty year, so I thought I'd jest come deown and look abeout a spell.

OFFICER. Have you been here long, sir?

UNCLE EP. Nigh onter two hour, I should jedge.

OFFICER. Have you seen the invalid?

UNCLE EP. There ain't no invalid as I know on, 'cept Maria, and she is took with a headache.

OFFICER. (*aside*) There's something very queer about this business. I'm certain I've seen one of those young ladies somewhere, and have heard her talk, too. (*To the others*) Is the invalid able to leave her bed?

(MAUD *looks inquiringly at the girls, who shake their heads in despair.*)

UNCLE EP. I ain't much in looks, I know; but jest say the word, dears, and I'll have that feller out'n the house afore he can say Jack Robinson.

OFFICER. Have a care, sir. You may go too far.

UNCLE EP. I ain't in no notion of travelin' any further than John Henry's this day. I'm clean tuckered out as it is.

(*Enter* LUCY, L., *who stares in amazement at the officer.*)

OFFICER. (*advancing toward her*) Lucy! you here? These five years I have searched for you in vain. (LUCY *shakes her head and turns away*) What! Are you dumb, too? I know you are not. Surely, you will help me out of this embarrassing situation. You will not? Then I must do my duty. Ladies, I demand the right to see the invalid.

(*The girls look at one another in dismay, and then the clock strikes six.*)

SUE. (*stepping toward the door at* L. *and opening it*) Ma, will you please come out? A gentleman wishes to see you.

(*Enter* MRS. M., L. *Her eyes rest first on* UNCLE EP, *who is staring in bewilderment at* SUE.)

MRS. M. Why, Uncle Ep, this is a surprise!

SUE. (*turning her attention to the officer*) This is the gentleman who wishes to see you. He thinks you have the small-pox,

MRS. M. Small-pox!

OFFICER. Pardon me, madam; I fear that I have made a grave mistake.

(*Enter* ALEX. WILSON, R., *in great haste.*)

WILSON. (*excitedly*) Have I been misinformed? Is anything the matter here?

SUE. No, we are all in good health and excellent spirits, and perhaps it would be as well to explain now why we have

all been dumb. We were merely trying to show father that women could keep their tongues still during an entire day.

OFFICER. And allow me to say that you have done it to perfection. Lucy, are you free to talk to me now?

LUCY. Yes, Paul.

(*He leads* LUCY *aside, and they talk in a low tone. At the same time* WILSON *unceremoniously takes possession of* JESSIE, *and leads her to the lounge, where they talk together.*)

SUE. Just think of it, Uncle Ep; father promised us each seventy-five dollars if we could keep from talking until the clock struck six.

UNCLE EP. Wal, John Henry never expected you'd win it, or he'd not promised. I know him from a boy.

SUE. But doesn't it seem good to be able to talk at last? Never before in my life did I want to say so many things, and I hardly think I could have kept still so long if it hadn't been for the thought that I would make all the others lose, too.

(*Enter* TOM *in haste,* R.)

TOM. Is anything the matter here? Anybody sick, or the house on fire, or anything? I heard all sorts of stories as I came along.

SUE. Pshaw, Tom! We have upset the whole town merely by earning our seventy-five dollars.

TOM. (*delightedly*) Have you, really? Haven't you spoken once to-day?

JESSIE. (*coming forward*) Not once until the clock struck six; but mother would have spoiled it all if we hadn't taken her bodily and locked her up.

LUCY. (*advancing*) And such things as have happened, too! Indeed, it has all been so exciting that I have forgotten to introduce my friend. This is Dr. Reynolds, who visited at our house at Rivington.

(*All recognize the introduction.*)

TOM. Why, Dr. Reynolds, I believe we have met before.

DR. REYNOLDS. Yes; I attended that man who was hurt near your office.

JESSIE. (*aside to* LUCY) I thought that Dr. Reynolds would turn up some day. (*To the* DOCTOR) And we met at Rivington, I think.

DR. REYNOLDS. Yes, indeed, Miss Middleton; I thought I had seen you before.

SUE. I tell you, Tom, we worked hard for that money.

UNCLE EP. (*laughing*) Wal, I should say they did, even to humbuggin' old Uncle Ep.

TOM. (*in surprise*) Why, I declare, is this Uncle Ep?

UNCLE EP. Yes; didn't you know me? Yes, yes, I'm Uncle Ep from way up kentry—Titusville, you know—where your father uster live when he was a leetle shaver. I ain't been in these parts for nigh onter thirty year, so I thought I'd jest come deown and look abeout a spell.

(*Enter* MR. MIDDLETON, R.)

JESSIE. O father! we have won the money!

MIDDLETON. W-h-a-t!

SUE. We didn't speak once until the clock struck six.

MIDDLETON. Do you think I'm going to believe that?

UNCLE EP. It's true, John Henry. Them gals was as dumb as a dead sheep—I can give my alferdavid on that.

MIDDLETON. Why, Uncle Ep, where did you come from? Glad to see you. (*Shakes hands*) And if there isn't young Dr. Reynolds—why, doctor, I didn't know you were acquainted with my folks.

DR. REYNOLDS. And I didn't know that a young friend of mine was living in your house.

MIDDLETON. And there's Mr. Wilson, and Miss Maud, too. Why, this is quite a surprise party. Well, well, so those women got the best of me, after all. Dear! dear! I never expected they could do it, or I shouldn't have been so generous; but a promise is a promise, so here goes! (*Gets his check-book and makes out a check for each one.*)

LUCY. I am ever so much obliged, Uncle John.

JESSIE. Indeed, I am, too.

SUE. I am, too, and can't we fix up for the wedding now?

MIDDLETON. (*suspiciously*) What wedding?

MRS. M. Why, the one down the street, of course.

MIDDLETON. Oh-h-h!

WILSON. (*taking* JESSIE'S *hand and stepping forward*) If there are no objections, we have decided that our wedding will be next.

TOM. (*who has been talking to* MAUD, *steps forward with her on his arm*) And then ours.

ALL. What!

SUE. Wasn't it sly of them?

DR. REYNOLDS. (*taking* LUCY'S *hand*) Mr. Middleton, you know something about me, and when I tell you that I have waited five years for this young lady, perhaps you

will not object to our making Miss Jessie's wedding a double one.

UNCLE EP. Jiminy crickets! they're goin' like candles!

MIDDLETON. (*looking around*) Is there any one about here looking for my Sue? Well, it's lucky for him that there isn't, or he'd get his dismissal in a hurry. I may have to give in to the others, but Sue's too young yet.

SUE. (*putting her arms around his neck*) Indeed, father, you'll have to be making out checks for me for several years more.

(*All laugh but* MR. MIDDLETON, *and he groans. Knock at* R. *door. Enter* FRITZ *with* MARY *on his arm.*)

FRITZ. (*pointing to* MARY) I vant to marry mit dis voman.

MIDDLETON. How is that, Mary?

MARY. Sure, sorr, he's as good a wan as iver I coorted.

(*All struggle to keep from laughing.*)

MIDDLETON. Then the best thing you can do is to take him right away; but can't you wait an hour or two until you get up a good dinner for us and our friends?

FRITZ. Ya, ya, I vait dree hour, und dat is all.

MARY. Indade, sorr, the foinest male that iver you saw is arn the table this minute.

MRS. M. (*in alarm*) Getting all cold, I suppose.

MIDDLETON. (*taking his wife's arm*) Then, my dear, let us hasten to the dining-room, and while we satisfy the inner man I will listen to the account of how women, for the first time in their lives, succeeded in holding their tongues.

(*All advance to front of stage and bow.*)

CURTAIN.

Unusually Good Entertainments

Read One or More of These Before Deciding on Your Next Program

GRADUATION DAY AT WOOD HILL SCHOOL. An Entertainment in Two Acts, by WARD MACAULEY. For six males and four females, with several minor parts. Time of playing, two hours. Modern costumes. Simple interior scenes; may be presented in a hall without scenery. The unusual combination of a real "entertainment," including music, recitations, etc., with an interesting love story. The graduation exercises include short speeches, recitations, songs, funny interruptions, and a comical speech by a country school trustee.

EXAMINATION DAY AT WOOD HILL SCHOOL. An Entertainment in One Act, by WARD MACAULEY. Eight male and six female characters, with minor parts. Plays one hour. Scene, an easy interior, or may be given without scenery. Costumes, modern. Miss Marks, the teacher, refuses to marry a trustee, who threatens to discharge her. The examination includes recitations and songs, and brings out many funny answers to questions. At the close Robert Coleman, an old lover, claims the teacher. Very easy and very effective.

BACK TO THE COUNTRY STORE. A Rural Entertainment in Three Acts, by WARD MACAULEY. For four male and five female characters, with some supers. Time, two hours. Two scenes, both easy interiors. Can be played effectively without scenery. Costumes, modern. All the principal parts are sure hits. Quigley Higginbotham, known as "Quig," a clerk in a country store, aspires to be a great author or singer and decides to try his fortunes in New York. The last scene is in Quig's home. He returns a failure but is offered a partnership in the country store. He pops the question in the midst of a surprise party given in his honor. Easy to do and very funny.

THE DISTRICT CONVENTION. A Farcical Sketch in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For eleven males and one female, or twelve males. Any number of other parts or supernumeraries may be added. Plays forty-five minutes. No special scenery is required, and the costumes and properties are all easy. The play shows an uproarious political nominating convention. The climax comes when a woman's rights champion, captures the convention. There is a great chance to burlesque modern politics and to work in local gags. Every part will make a hit.

SI SLOCUM'S COUNTRY STORE. An Entertainment in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. Eleven male and five female characters with supernumeraries. Several parts may be doubled. Plays one hour. Interior scene, or may be played without set scenery. Costumes, modern. The rehearsal for an entertainment in the village church gives plenty of opportunity for specialty work. A very jolly entertainment of the sort adapted to almost any place or occasion.

Successful Plays for All Girls

In Selecting Your Next Play Do Not Overlook This List

YOUNG DOCTOR DEVINE. A Farce in Two Acts, by Mrs. E. J. H. Goodfellow. One of the most popular plays for girls. For nine female characters. Time in playing, thirty minutes. Scenery, ordinary interior. Modern costumes. Girls in a boarding-school, learning that a young doctor is coming to vaccinate all the pupils, eagerly consult each other as to the manner of fascinating the physician. When the doctor appears upon the scene the pupils discover that the physician is a female practitioner.

SISTER MASONS. A Burlesque in One Act, by Frank Dumont. For eleven females. Time, thirty minutes. Costumes, fantastic gowns, or dominoes. Scene, interior. A grand expose of Masonry. Some women profess to learn the secrets of a Masonic lodge by hearing their husbands talk in their sleep, and they institute a similar organization.

A COMMANDING POSITION. A Farcical Entertainment, by Amelia Sanford. For seven female characters and ten or more other ladies and children. Time, one hour. Costumes, modern. Scenes, easy interiors and one street scene. Marian Young gets tired living with her aunt, Miss Skinflint. She decides to "attain a commanding position." Marian tries hospital nursing, college settlement work and school teaching, but decides to go back to housework.

HOW A WOMAN KEEPS A SECRET. A Comedy in One Act, by Frank Dumont. For ten female characters. Time, half an hour. Scene, an easy interior. Costumes, modern. Mabel Sweetly has just become engaged to Harold, but it's "the deepest kind of a secret." Before announcing it they must win the approval of Harold's uncle, now in Europe, or lose a possible ten thousand a year. At a tea Mabel meets her dearest friend Maude sees Mabel has a secret, she coaxes and Mabel tells her. But Maude lets out the secret in a few minutes to another friend and so the secret travels.

THE OXFORD AFFAIR. A Comedy in Three Acts, by Josephine H. Cobb and Jennie E. Paine. For eight female characters. Plays one hour and three-quarters. Scenes, interiors at a seaside hotel. Costumes, modern. The action of the play is located at a summer resort. Alice Graham, in order to chaperon herself, poses as a widow, and Miss Oxford first claims her as a sister-in-law, then denounces her. The onerous duties of Miss Oxford, who attempts to serve as chaperon to Miss Howe and Miss Ashton in the face of many obstacles, furnish an evening of rare enjoyment.

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